

Interview with Jane Chapman
Conducted by Linda Byrne for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective
Part 2 of 2 Parts

Linda Byrne: Today is January 15, 2008 and I am at Supervisor Smyth's office, my name is Linda Byrne, and with me today is Jane Chapman. This is the second part of her interview for the Providence Perspective.

Linda: Good Morning Jane. I understand that you had some thoughts of other things that you would like to add to your previous interview.

Jane: Good morning Linda. I had about a million when I got home. Okay we'll start with the Jefferson Village Shopping Center there was a pharmacy and a theater, which you have a picture of, and lots of little shops, a barbershop and a grocery store. The kids use to call each other on the phone and say, let's sneak down to JV and get a coke. Parents did not know what JV was. That was a great little shopping center and everybody congregated there, the kids could walk there even though it was close to a mile from home. Everybody could walk, they were safe, and there were no problems.

At the other end near Marshall Street, Marshall Street is now a link between Arlington Boulevard and Lee Highway, at the time that Jefferson Village Homes was established and Greenway Downs Homes were established, Marshall Street was not cut through. The Creek ran through at Custis Parkway, however; if you were cautious the guys who lived down at Custis Parkway would throw great big planks across the creek because it was so shallow, and you could drive across the planks (in your car) with their help. But, when they had a big rainstorm and the creek flooded, they would go out and put up barriers and you had to go make a detour. Marshall Street was never ever supposed to be cut through and one of my neighbors bought their house on Marshall Street because it was such a quiet street. Now it is extremely busy because it is the cut through between the two highways.

Goodwin Court groceries and apartments were on Lee Hwy very close to Rosemary Lane. The Goodwin's owned the little grocery store, which is now a Laundromat. They owned the apartments down the hill and the street that goes down to the apartments is Goodwin's Court. As I said the grocery store is now a Laundromat.

Linda: So what sort of time frame would that have changed over?

Jane: Within the last 20 years, the Goodwin's got old and they sold the apartments and the grocery store. It was a little DGS Grocery store which was dotted all over the area and they sold out and now it is still Cullington Courts, but it is still Goodwin Street.

Up the street a little ways there was a little vacant piece of land on the other side of Graham Road and the neighbors, because there was only one swimming pool anywhere near us, the neighbors decided they would band together and decided they would make Graham Road a swimming pool corporation, which they did. They had the swimming pool and they put in a tennis court and this was a real big deal and you could join, it was a membership thing.

Linda: This was at the corner of?

Jane: It was just a little ways west of Graham Road on Lee Highway. They had a lot of people and they had a wonderful swimming team set up there and they now compete all across the county.

Linda: What is the name of that pool?

Jane: Lee Graham Pool. Years ago, when the little leagues were just forming around this area, they would have a parade to open the season and it would start in the town of Falls Church, now the city. It would march up Seaton Lane, to Lee Highway, to Woodley Place then down to Lee Highway and end up at Lee Graham Pool where they had the baseball diamonds and that was the opening day of little league. The Police would go out and block off Lee Highway so all these straggly little kids could march across Lee Highway. They still have a baseball team there, a little league.

Up the street a little ways on Lee Highway at West Street, there use to be the Ancient Oaks Trailer Court and it got its name from the ancient Oak trees that were there; they were huge old Oak trees. It was a real old-fashioned trailer court and it was right on the corner. Now there's a Safeway grocery store, a Texaco Gas Station, and a bank and a Wendy are on that part of the lot. Across from that on the north side of Lee Highway was a group of homes called Igloo Houses and they were two domes, and they were white (like an Igloo would be) and joined in the center like the end of a box and that was the front door. The houses inside were round, it was two domes outside - it looked like two big snowballs joined together. They were interesting houses, I got to go into one at one time to visit some friends and they now are gone. I now can't remember if that is part of Timberland Apartments or whether it is part of National Memorial Cemetery, but it is right in that area.

Up the street, on the Southside of Lee Highway there is a high rise apartment building called the Churchill that years ago was Sypes Motel, they had a swimming pool in the back and this was quite an attraction because this was the only pool around, way before Lee Graham. Their sons were teenagers 17 and 18 years old and had passed their Red Cross life saving swimming instructors courses and they gave swimming lessons, in the summertime, to all the kids in the area.

Linda: That is great. What years would that have been?

Jane: I can't tell you the year, but I can tell you it had to be 50 years ago because my older son and daughter took swimming lessons.

Linda: It had to be in the 1950's.

Jane: Yea it was a long time ago and now there is a high-rise apartment there and it is right next to Fenwick Park Houses and right across from the National Memorial Cemetery. Up the street a little further are three apartment complexes, which at one time were only one complex. Pine Springs was the name, now it is Fairfield, Overton and Pine Springs. We had a tornado years ago that came all the way across the county. It tore up

Woodson High School over in Annandale; it came across the county and took the roof off of what are now Dave Woods Apartments but was then called Fallsfax and that was the end of the bus line for Lee Highway. That was quite a deal. Everyone had to go and see the roof's torn off because that had never happened around here before.

Years ago, Mr. & Mrs. Blair lived down on Cherry Street. Mrs. Blair was called Mom Blair; she drove the school bus for my area to Falls Church High and to the other schools. When the snow would come down, and the weather would get slick, she would come up Jefferson Avenue to Woodlawn Avenue and put her bus at the bottom of Wood lawn Avenue instead of going up the hill which is very steep. She would holler out the window "you kids go up to the Lutheran Church" and she would go around the block and pick them up at the Lutheran Church because she didn't want to put the bus up the hill. Mr. Blair was called Dad Blair; they had kids the same age as with the people they were working with. He was the manager of the Drug Fair store one at Falls Church and one at Graham Road, and each time it was located near a Falls Church High School football field. In the fall when they were having their football games Dad Blair would wait until he knew it was the last end of the quarter, then he would lock up the drug store, he would lock it because he knew he kids would swarm him and mess up his store, because he had a soda fountain, so he would lock them out.

Jane: When Seven Eleven first opened in this area they were drive-ins or drive-ups.

Linda: My goodness, I didn't know that.

Jane: You would drive up to the front of the store; flash your lights and the guys would come out and take your order, go back into the store fill it and bring it to you.

Linda: Oh, isn't that wonderful!

Jane: This was very novel and that was fun and it got so they were too busy to do that and it went to in the store stuff, but it was fun and everybody had a good time with that.

Across the street, which is Loehman's Plaza, years ago when it just turned from an airport into a plaza there was a Roy Roger's and this was not in Providence District. After elections, after all the Chief Election Officers had gone up to the City of Fairfax and turned in their equipment at the courthouse, the ones in our area would go back to Roy Rogers and eat fried chicken dinners at 9 o'clock at night and sit around and talk about the crowds that had or had not shown up. At the top of Seven Corners, the very top was a Howard Johnson's, it is now some type of Italian Restaurant, but years ago it was a Howard Johnson's. Besides the Howard Johnson's coming down between Hillwood Avenue and Arlington Blvd service road, was a big vacant lot and that's where Craven had a Craven's flower plant center and in the wintertime he sold Christmas Trees.

Linda: That is Craven Nurseries.

Jane: Yes on Arlington Boulevard; and everybody would go up there and buy their Christmas Trees, so that was a great thing. At the Howard Johnson's, when that property that Craven had was sold, because he had only rented it, they put in a Giant grocery store and that was the only Giant grocery store that Abe Cohen owned in full. It was a little store, at the time it was suppose to be big, but it was little and he dearly loved that store and he would come in and stock it. If something was missing he would go back stock it; that was his grocery store. It is now the BB&T Towers. BB&T was a banking company that came in and bought the Falls Church First Virginia Bank out and that is where that is.

Down on Lee Highway at the intersection of Summerfield Road was a little strip shopping center; there was a Saunders Bakery and a little deli, a real honest to goodness deli with a keg sitting in front of the counter full of dill pickles, the best I have ever eaten. It was run by a war veteran and his wife and eventually it got so he could not do the store anymore because he had been wounded, so they gave that up. But at Saunders Bakery you could go in there and get the best pies, cakes, and rolls and bread. It was a

wonderful place because the kids could go down and get a doughnut and this was all within walking distance, all in Providence District so that was a great place to be.

Jane: Years ago in Providence District they had home delivery of milk and the milkman from Chestnut Farms had this territory and he would also deliver eggs and bread. You had a little box on your front porch or front stoop and he would come by and put your butter, and your cream and your milk and your bread and eggs in this little teeny square box and he would collect the bill, once a month.

Linda: I remember that. I remember those boxes and as a kid you would go up to the truck and ask him if he had any ice he could give you to chew on.

Jane: Then there was Jewel Tea Company. One of my neighbors had the Jewel Tea Franchise for my area. If you ran short of something like coffee, tea, or baking soda or something like that in my neighborhood you would run down to Davidson's, to the Jewel Tea man and Dave would run out to the truck and get it for us.

Linda: What was the Jewel Tea Company?

Jane: It was a big nationwide company that sold bowls and teapots, with the infuser inside of it, and a whole set of mixed bowls. They sold everything you could put in a pantry not canned goods but things like baking soda and tea and coffee. It was the old Jewel Tea Company a nationwide company and they farmed out into hiring people and they had a big truck and it was brown and every time I see a UPS truck, I think of Jewel Tea. My daughter now has a set of the bowls, nesting bowls and she has my teapot. They all had a distinctive pattern to them and it was, I guess, copyrighted because I have never seen the pattern anywhere else except on Jewel Tea products.

Linda: What type of a pattern was it?

Jane: I think it is a leaf pattern, oranges and browns on a sort of a beige background. But, anywhere you see that if you are my age, you know that's Jewel Tea, like I said, Chestnut Farms and Jewel Tea.

Then in the neighborhood, every fall and every spring the scissor grinder would come in his truck. He would sit at one end of our block and everybody else's block he would get near the end where there were intersecting streets, and he'd clang his bell. And in those days your houses weren't closed up because you didn't have air conditioning and you could hear that bell clang for a couple of blocks. Everybody in the world would grab up their scissors and grab up their knives and stand in line for this man to grind up and sharpen our scissors and knives. That was just as regular as clockwork.

Then in the summertime comes another vendor who sells fresh vegetables off of a truck. He sold vegetables, strawberries, blueberries and blackberries and he would come once a week in the summertime and he'd sit in the middle of the block and ring a bell and everybody would go out and buy their fresh fruits and vegetables, which was terrific.

Linda: I wish we had that today, we have farmer's markets, but that would be better.

Jane: What I miss most is that scissor grinder.

Linda: I remember I grew up in Washington, D.C., and I remember the scissor grinder in the 1940's coming to our neighborhood through the back alleys with his horse drawn cart.

Jane: Me too. We did not have fire companies like we have now. There weren't any in Fairfax County to talk about. As far as I can remember there was Bailey's Crossroads Fire Department, volunteer, Annandale volunteer, Dunn Loring volunteer, and Falls Church volunteer and for this end of the county that was it. Some people in our area decided we needed a fire department, so they went and investigated how you would start one. They bought a little piece of land, the only part available at Hodge Place and Arlington Blvd. They went around the neighborhood, several of the men,

and solicited to build a volunteer fire department, which is the Jefferson Fire Department Company 18.

My husband and I were in the yard and Mr. Proctor came by and he told us what they were trying to do and they were asking each family for \$300. My husband said he would have to think this over. We got back in the house and he said "I have never been so embarrassed because we just don't have \$300 to donate". So that is how Jefferson Village Fire Department started; and they still have a volunteer section to it but it is all paid now but they still have a volunteer company. That was the start of really expanding the fire departments in Fairfax County because this was back in the early 1950's, 1949 or 1950 and it grew from there. Now there are still volunteer companies but they are manned by paid professionals in the county. Where we are sitting now, I can remember when this was built, Merrifield Company 30.

Linda: I might mention that Supervisor Smyth's office is in the same building as that firehouse.

Jane: Yes, very convenient. At the time Fairfax County did not have the facilities that they have now for people. Everybody in the county had a private trash collector and they collected twice a week from your back yard. We had metal trashcans, there were no plastic ones and that was fine. Then the county got into the trash collecting business which is much better, believe me. There was mail delivery at the time, twice a day to your home.

Linda: Twice a day really?

Jane: Yes, once early in the morning, we always got it before 10:00 am and the next delivery was around 2:00 or 2:30 in the afternoon. At the time we had a little Boston terrier who just adored my mailman, Howard. My little Boston terrier would jump our three foot chain link fence when he'd see Howard across the street. When Howard got to our house the dog would follow him down to the end of the block and then the next block and then he would turn around and come back home because he figured Howard could do the rest by himself. But, mail delivery was twice a day and that's not anymore.

Aronow Drive in City Park Homes, Jefferson Village was named after the contractor who built our section of Jefferson Village, he was a young man from New York State and he's the one who sold us our house in 1947 or 1948. He was almost finished our subdivision and he had a massive heart attack and died right there. So, the people who owned the property and were building the houses decided that the last street in our neighborhood would be named Aronow Drive after him. Sure enough across from Faith Lutheran Church is Aronow Drive, it goes up the hill goes around the circle and comes back down. That street is named after the man who was the head of our section of our development.

Jefferson Village was started before the Second World War and they were little cinderblock houses down towards Summerfield. And then after the Second World War the rest of it was built up in sections. I think there are five sections to it but I can't remember for sure. One of the things about our neighborhood was that there was no air conditioning in the houses and there were very few clothes dryers. You may have had an automatic washing machine and some people still had wringer washers and everybody had a clothesline. It was a great contest to see who could get their clothes out on Monday morning on the clothesline before everybody else. So this was fun, and then after you got your clothes up you would hang over the back fence and talk for a while. In the wintertime when it started getting cold the sheets would freeze on the line, but they smelled so good - all that beautiful sunshine.

At Knox Presbyterian Church there is a food pantry for those in need. That food pantry started many; many years ago back in the 1950's when the church was built. They had a small food pantry and they had a small clothes closet. At that time Jefferson Village Apartments were all apartments, now there are two sections to it which part of it is public housing and part of it's still individual, they are townhouse apartments. When the man who owned the project Jefferson Village Apartment wanted to rehabilitate them the county objected because it was going to take away some housing that people could afford, so there was a deal struck. He would give the Public Housing Authority so many units and he would remodel them to a certain point. His stipulation was that the fronts could

not look like his private property, and to this day they do not. The parking that goes with the public housing is marked very clearly, public housing parking only and the rest is still private. There were 542 units and the county got so many of those units and they are over by the Knox Presbyterian Church, which ties in unfortunately with the food pantry. They did away with the clothes closet.

Linda: But the food pantry is still there today?

Jane: The food pantry is still there. The boy scout troop at the Lutheran Church at Woodlawn Avenue, which is about three or four long blocks away, comes around two Saturday's before Thanksgiving and hangs a plastic bag on your doorknob, please donate for the food pantry. They come back the following Saturday, and it has to be staples, and you have your bag sitting on your front porch or steps and they come by and collect it and they take the whole thing up to the Knox Presbyterian Church for the food pantry. They stock that once a year and that's part of the boy scouts project. That troop started years, years and years ago, cub scouts and boy scouts and it is still active to this day.

Linda: Isn't that great.

Jane: Let's see, in or about 55 years ago is when that Boy Scout troop started and it met at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church at Woodlawn in Arlington.

Linda: You wouldn't happen to know the number of that troop would you? (I think I will look it up)

Jane: I think I do, but I don't know for sure. The Boy Scout troop had a school bus that they converted to transport them around and one of the fathers who did the driving also let the girl scouts use the bus and he would take us down to wherever we were camping for the week end. One year there were suppose to be some storms coming through so he had his wife follow him down and he left the bus there. He got off the bus and we all unloaded and just before he got in the car with his wife he handed me the keys and said here if there is trouble, you can drive home. I had never

driven a bus in my life and I was petrified, I'm way down in the Shenandoah Valley. I said "I can't drive this", he said "sure you can, there's only seven gears". **(Linda:** Oh, my goodness) So I said "okay, if I strip the gears, it's your fault". But of course we didn't have any trouble and he came back and got us. But that was very nice; we were all the same neighbors.

In Falls Church, at the time it was a town, right in the middle on Washington Street, which is Rt. 29 was a White House Motel, a very nice one and behind that they had an ice skating rink. All the kids skated there in the wintertime just like they used Sypes pool in the summertime. That was the only ice rink around; the next one was in Washington so a lot of kids went up there. They had two young ice skating instructors that would circle the rink all the time, and they were two of the best looking teenagers I think I had seen in a long time, and I am an old lady. All the girls were madly in love with these two fellows, it was a riot, and sometimes they would fall down deliberately so they could get picked up. These were little girls; they weren't even middle aged teenagers yet. But the White House Motel had that and now it is the Kaiser Permanente, and that was a long time ago.

Graham Road School was built after the town of Falls Church became a city because they would no longer accept our kids. Our kids went to what was then Oak Street School, which is now Thomas Jefferson Elementary in Falls Church. So they built Graham Road School adjacent to Jefferson Village Townhouse Apartments on Graham Road close to Arlington Blvd., and that was many years ago.

Jefferson Village had a Civic Association, which at the time was very active because of all these men and women who lived in our neighborhood were from the Second World War, they were young we had families. We had this Civic Association which would put on a carnival on the fourth of July at what is Jefferson Village Park at the baseball field, and everybody in the neighborhood would go down for the carnival. It had all these little booths and stuff and the fire department would show up, and that was a treat too.

When we first started voting in 1948, Jefferson Village was still being developed and on the grounds of what was to become the Baptist Church

it's terraced, on the first level of the terrace, up at the top towards the middle was a construction shed. When they finished they left the construction shed for one year and that is the first place that we voted at the construction shed on Arlington Boulevard and Westcott Street.

Then they moved the precinct across the street into a house that the Baptist Church owned. The Baptist Church had built a huge big building at Westcott Street and Arlington Blvd. They also bought the two-story house across the street and that was the second precinct. The Girl Scout troops went and fixed lunch as part of their service project, for all the poll workers which we took to the poll workers and fed them their lunch. After Graham Road School was built the precinct was changed and the voting location was moved to the Graham Road School, which was a lot more convenient and a lot bigger.

At Christmas, after the volunteer fire department was formed, and equipment was bought Santa Claus would ride through our neighborhood, the Jefferson Village neighborhood on the fire truck and they would blow that horn and you could hear it for blocks that big air horn. All the kids would come flying out of their houses and sometimes you had to chase them with their coats, because they knew Santa Claus was on top of the fire truck and he would throw candy out to the kids. They still do that but they don't cover every street now, they just cover the main streets, but you can still hear the air horn.

The civic association decided that Jefferson Village needed to be beautified. They contracted with a nursery, and I can't remember which one, for Azaleas and you could buy so many Azaleas for your property and they came around and gave them to you and you planted them. There are still some of those Azaleas in our neighborhood, they are absolutely huge. Some have had to be trimmed back because they would go out into the street, at that point people did not realize that three feet of your property belongs to the county. Look for your water main and anything between there and the street does not belong to you and they planted the Azaleas anywhere they wanted to and this is the reason some of them had to be trimmed back.

We had a fire in Greenway Downs on New Years Day and it was part of George Mason's property and it burnt down to the ground because there was a bunch of so called hippies living there at the time. They had lit candles all over their house and they caught fire and burnt down. The fire departments, the two of them Falls Church and Jefferson couldn't get enough water pressure because it sat at the top of a hill that is why it burnt to the ground. But it was quite a thing because you could see it, the smoke for blocks and blocks and blocks and this was on New Years Day because I had a house full of people who'd come for a New Years Day buffet. So we all marched down to the creek and watched the fire from the creek.

Linda: Well do you have any advice for people growing up in Providence today, for young families that are moving in or for people who have live here for a long time?

Jane: No, well believe it or not there are people who have live here for years. Providence has grown so big and there is so much development and so much to come that I really feel sorry for the young people growing up here now. They don't have the freedom that my kids had. I don't think that the teenagers have the feeling of living in a community, where your mom's watching after me and I better behave, that's missing and it's a shame I wish the young people would get that back together. I can see it beginning to happen in my neighborhood. There are now a lot of people who are walking young kids, babies, little ones and they are visiting back and forth. But, the young people today and this is a very prejudice view, want everything that they can get. They don't believe in two kids sharing a room, each child has to have their own so if they have two or maybe three kids they are moving back out and buying bigger houses. But, with the economy the way it is and the housing boom I can see where they are going to have to adjust.

Their isn't the same camaraderie in the high schools or the junior high's that I have seen when my kids were growing up and I don't know whether that is because the neighborhood has become so ethnically diverse or whether it's is just the time of our lives. The kids aren't as free now I wish they were; it would be nice to see some of them wading in the creek. But

you don't have the same amenities in the neighborhoods that we use to have.

There's is no Junior Women's Club in our neighborhood anymore, or any of the others. Our civic association died for lack of attendance and it was reactivated when they found out we had to have some work done in our neighborhood and it weren't going to get done unless we banded together. I would really like to see them all make an effort to become one big solid community because I think it is all fractured now. I guess I am an old fuddy duddy.

Linda: I think you are absolutely right. I think things are changing and hopefully they will change and continue to change for the better, hopefully in the future.

Jane: Well I hope so too.

Linda: Well, I thank you very much. I appreciate your interview.